

Running head: SCHEDULING AND LOGISTICS

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Vignette. Suzanne is a mother of three. She works at the elementary school close to her house and has been there for 15 years. Suzanne is a busy person. With three kids, she is constantly balancing their activities. Her oldest is a soccer player who has games on the weekends and practice during the week. Her middle child is in dance class twice a week, and takes piano lessons on the weekends. Her youngest is learning to play softball and takes art classes during the week. Suzanne and her husband also like to cook, and they have been taking a cooking class on Sundays. With their jobs, kids, and interests, there never seems to be a dull moment. Suzanne is a busy lady with a busy household. How does she fit it all in?

Think for a moment about your typical weekend schedule. Does it make you think of free time and relaxation? Or does it make you think of balancing errands, kid activities, and getting things done for work? While you may be one of the lucky ones who seems to have time to get things done, more likely you identify with Suzanne, who is a busy mom trying to fit everything in. And that's ok. Participating in activities and getting things done with family is the stuff of life. While it can be crazy at times, it is rewarding.

Take a minute and use the following table to write down all of the activities you typically need to get done in a weekend. In the second column, write down how long you would ideally have for each activity. Don't hesitate. Think big. How much time would you really want to get that task done? Finally, in the third column, write down how much time actually exists for that activity to be accomplished.

[illegible]

What do you notice about the time needed and time that exists? If you found that those columns matched, congratulations. You are one of the lucky ones who has managed to find the time to get it all done. Would you please share your secrets with the rest of us?

If you found that the two columns did not match, you are part of the larger group of people who would like more time to make things work. Now, we could use this as a format to admire the problem. "There is never enough time", we could say. "I wish there were 30 hours in a day". "How am I going to fit all of this in?" "Isn't there ever time for myself?"

While we all tend to have these thoughts once in a while, it is those people that choose to make it work, even given all of their responsibilities, that have the most success. Think about the difference between the ideal time and actual time. Ask yourself the following questions:

- How do you prioritize the family activities?
- What stays and what goes when there is a time crunch?
- How do you make those decisions of what to do and what to exclude?
- What principles and beliefs do you use to prioritize?

The above example is included to help us think about priorities, planning and scheduling in our personal lives. While these situations do look different than planning and scheduling at work for the school day, the ideas are the same. Often, there is never enough time in the school day to fit in all of the activities. We are constantly balancing a variety of activities with limited time. There are assemblies, visitors, special events that can detract from the day. There is an emphasis on improved performance in all academic areas, not just reading. There needs to be time for specials like art, music, library, computer lab and P.E. With all of the above, how do we create school schedules that work?

In an RTI system, there inevitably needs to be more time that is devoted to intervention groups. We expect that the core curriculum will be meeting the needs of 80% of our students. This still leaves 20% of kids that require additional support. These 20% may be at a strategic

level or they may be at an intensive level. Students at an intensive level will require even more time than those at a strategic level to close the gap and make progress to catch up to their peers. Thus we are attempting to now find even more time during the day to fit the intervention groups in.

While it is not an easy task, it is a doable task. Yes, there is more time required of the school day to provide students the instruction they need. Yet, school after school, district after district are revamping their schedules and making it work. They're assessing their needs, prioritizing their goals, adding some here, and subtracting some there to find the time to run intervention groups and fit it all in.

Vignette. Briarwood school is an elementary in a suburban area. There are 600 students in grades K-6 that attend Briarwood. In the past, this school had mostly high performing students that did not require much additional support. In recent years, the population of Briarwood is changing and there are more students in need of additional instruction. Because of this changing demographic, the principal and school leadership team decided to start using an RTI system. They took a year to attend trainings, makes plans for interventions, determine assessment tools, and share the ideas of RTI with the whole staff. They realized that all of the ideas resonated with their beliefs. The school was grounded on the belief that all students can learn, assessment should be linked to intervention, and support should be provided earlier rather than later. But the \$64,000 question remained. What would it look like? How would the planning and logistics play out? They realized they had to start by looking at the schedule. To make the easiest transition, they decided to not modify the schedule much at all. Instead, they had the advisory period also act as an intervention period. For those students requiring additional instruction, they went to the intervention group. For those students who were successful in the core curriculum, they went to the advisory. To reduce discrepancies between the students, all the classes were still referred to as the 'advisory class'. The only difference was that some students received additional instruction in reading or math if they attended the intervention group.

The schedule below represents the general schedule for the whole school. Differences by grade level are not reflected here.

Period	Time
1st Period	8:05 to 8:55
2nd Period	9:00 to 9:50
Advisory Period	9:55 to 10:15
3rd period	10:20 to 11:10
First Lunch	11:15 to 12:00
Second Lunch	12:05 to 12:50
5th Period	12:55-1:45
6th Period	1:50-2:40
7th Period	2:45-3:35

Planning for Change

Take a moment and think about some of the meetings you have been a part of lately. What thoughts come to you mind? If it was a productive meeting, what made it so? If the meeting could have been organized differently, what would have made it more effective? We have likely all participated in meetings that have been quite productive, and also meetings that have seemed like a waste of time. Think about what characteristics you appreciated about the last effective meeting you participated in. Use the space below to list some of these aspects.

Meeting Characteristics	
1.	_____
2.	_____
3.	_____
4.	_____
5.	_____

Now compare your list to the following questions. What is similar? What is different?
Think about what specifically made the meeting an effective one. One that was safe, respectful,

and honest. If you were to attempt to hold another meeting with the same conditions, what would you absolutely want to ensure exists?

Questions to Consider for a Productive Meeting

- Is the meeting structured with a purpose, process, and expected outcomes?
- Does the meeting follow a clear outline?
- Are all of the designated participants in attendance?
- If not, is there a clear plan of how information will be relayed to absent participants?
- Is it clear why all participants are involved?
- Is there a designated facilitator?
- Is there a designated leader?
- Is there a designated time keeper?
- Is there a designated recorder?
- Is the goal of the meeting clear?
- Is everyone given an equal opportunity to participate?
- Are people recognized for their involvement in the meeting?
- Are people allowed to ask questions or voice their opinions?
- Is there an action plan to complete after the meeting?
- Is there a way to ensure follow through with the action plan?
- Is there a follow up meeting scheduled if necessary?

Structuring the Meeting

It is likely that you can think of many different types of meetings. Those meetings that were organized and efficient. Those meetings that were unstructured, yet still productive. Those meetings that were planned well, but some issues were not addressed. Those meetings where the discussion was fantastic, but you left with no plan of action. And those meetings that you dreaded and left afterwards feeling displeased.

Often it is not because individuals at the meeting do not want to accomplish the objectives or work together as a team. It is that there is a lack of structure to run the meeting. By bringing people together without established norms or objectives, the goals may or may not be met. Individuals may or may not understand their roles, and may or may not participate. People may leave feeling unheard, dissatisfied, and have a lack of desire to be involved in the next meeting. A clear outline and structure can change that.

Vignette. Pine tree elementary was in their first year of implementing RTI. Given that it was quite a change from old practices, the transition was smooth and relatively easy. The RTI leadership team attended trainings to learn about the rationale and implementation, the principal helped the team present the information to the rest of the staff, and most teachers were in agreement about the new model of providing support. While all transitions have their ups and downs, the process overall seemed to be going over well. Once the school had a deeper understanding of RTI, the principal started to hold grade level data meetings. These meetings were designed to review student data, make decisions about setting up additional support, and problem solve as a team. The conversations in these meetings were impressive. Teachers were bringing great questions to the table, the grade levels were working together to think about interventions, and the principal was there to support and guide teachers through the process. People left these meetings feeling good. Quality discussions were happening and teachers felt like they were heard. An outside observer would be able to see the qualities of the meetings that made them feel effective. But the question was, were they really effective? While the meetings were productive in terms of discussion, team building, and leadership, there was one crucial piece missing: the action plan. Each teacher left the meetings without a designated responsibility. Without a task, it was easy for there to be no follow up. Yes, teachers talked about setting up interventions and yes, sometimes they did. Yes, teachers said they would call parents, and yes, sometimes they did. Yes, teachers said they would monitor data on individual students, and yes, sometimes they did. But most of the time, most people did nothing. Not because they didn't want to, but because life gets in the way. The teachers walked away with a great conversation and that was it. Without these plans, follow up was difficult. The principal couldn't really hold individuals

accountable, because nothing was ever decided. Teachers left excited, but quickly forgot about the meeting as they moved on to the next week. It was nobody's fault, yet it was everybody's fault. Great conversations but no action. What was happening to the students in the meantime?

By year two of RTI implementation, the principal realized what was occurring. At first he thought it was just because year one was a transition year and most teachers were just learning about the process. It was when the fall of year two came around that he saw similar patterns in his staff. At this point he knew something needed to change. And he had the willingness and insight to recognize that his meetings were not as organized as they could be. He saw quality discussion, but knew that teacher practices needed to change. From that point on, he structured the meetings with an outline. He gave people roles like recorder and timekeeper. And most importantly, each teacher left with a designated responsibility. It was this responsibility that would be discussed at the next meeting and follow up decisions would be made. While there were still ups and downs, from that point on, teachers fulfilled their tasks and were able to come back and talk about what worked and what didn't. This is where a lot of the real learning occurred.

The table below is one example of an action plan that can be completed at the end of a meeting.

Action Plan				
Action steps	Target date	Person responsible	Resources needed	Completed?
1.				
2.				

3.				
4.				
5.				

Decision-Making Framework

This is why it is useful to use a plan that works for the culture of your school. A change in the schedule takes time to prioritize, plan and decide on as a school. During a process like this, it is helpful to have a decision-making framework to work from. A decision-making framework is a set of general steps that allow the team to move forward in a structured and organized way.

There are many decision-making frameworks that exist. Some are more detailed and in depth, some are simple in nature. The framework provided is one option. It is a set of steps that allows teams to consider their principles, use them to set guidelines for change, and review options as they are discussed.

Decision-Making Framework

1. Identify your guiding principles as a school.
 - Consider what truths you operate from.
2. Determine guidelines for change.
 - What are the “must haves”, the “maybes”, and the unnecessary components?
3. Brainstorm options.
 - List all of the possible options that exist. Throw anything out there.
4. Evaluate the options.
 - What are the pros and cons of each option?

5. Reach consensus.
 - Consider how this will be accomplished. A vote? A majority decision?
6. Plan the decision.
 - Determine the time, resources, and tools necessary for success.
7. Implement the decision.
 - Do it with 100% effort and execution.
8. Evaluate the decision.
 - What's working? What could be improved?

The steps above are straightforward and outline a clear plan of how a decision can be made. The steps are not necessarily insightful, or provide you anything that you have not heard of before. Yet they are effective because they are delineated and clear. By using a framework, a team can reach a decision more easily and more efficiently. It allows participants to know the purpose of the meeting and the process that will get them there.

Step one is identifying the principles that guide the schools' actions. Webster's dictionary defines principle as a "basic generalization that is accepted as true and can be used as the basis for reasoning or conduct" (Webster's dictionary, 2008). Principles form the foundation of practice because they are overarching ideas that provide a picture of how the school can operate. They are general in nature and offer a structure to work from. Principles naturally are fleshed out through goals, plans, and actions. They are the guiding force behind school decisions.

Step two is determining the guidelines for the school schedule. What components of the schedule are "non-negotiables"? What subjects will stay regardless of what changes occur? These are core classes like reading, writing, and math. There may be other classes your school considers essential as well. Like art, music, and P.E. Some districts consider these additional options, while other districts consider them necessary.

Next consider the "maybes". The components that are good to include, but may not be essential according to your principles. Finally, consider what can be deleted from the schedule.

Are there components that people agree can be changed? Are there classes that people believe can be erased from the daily routine?

As you were reading the previous paragraph, it is possible you were thinking, “Well how does that work? We all have different views and opinions on what is necessary, negotiable, and easily deleted.” And you’re correct. While this can be a smooth process, it doesn’t mean it will always be an easy process. The schedule is the one constant that impacts everybody’s day, and changing it carries huge implications for all staff in the school.

This is where step three comes in. Brainstorm all possible options. This means anything. The point of this activity is to get people thinking creatively and with freedom. To do so, there has to be a safe, easy method for brainstorming. Participants have to feel like they can say anything and know that it won’t be judged or ridiculed. This allows people to think more freely.

Brainstorming can be done verbally in a small group, with one person acting as the recorder. This option typically works best when all members of the group are comfortable around one another. This process can also be accomplished by asking participants to write their ideas anonymously and turn them in to one person to record them. There are other ways this task can be accomplished as well. The point of this step is that there are no guidelines, limits, or rules about what can be said. With total freedom, any option is possible, and out of all of these options, one idea may just make perfect sense.

Now that all of the ideas are on the table, step four comes in. Evaluate the options. What are the pros and cons of each? It is helpful to have a team work through this step, as there may be a lot of options to review. Defining the activity as listing two pros and two cons of each option can make it more manageable.

The team reviews each idea and lists the pluses and minuses, advantages and disadvantages, until they get through all of the options. It is important that this is done with all of the brainstormed possibilities, regardless of how illogical some of the ideas may seem. In this way, all of the ideas are given credit, and all are equally reviewed as possibilities for implementation. This supports the freedom and flexibility in creating them.

Step five. Make a decision as a team. This step completely depends on who is involved in the decision-making process and who has been designated decision-making responsibilities. In some cases, the leadership team pulls together the options with pros and cons from the staff, but ultimately the principal and assistant principal decide. In other situations, the principal may be more directly involved with brainstorming and listing pros and cons, but the district administrative team ultimately makes the decision. It is likely that the principal is part of the district administrative team, but also possible that he or she does not ultimately get to vote. In other schools, it is the principal and leadership team that decide together, after reviewing all of the options. Finally it can be possible that the whole staff participates in voting.

It is clear that there are many variations that can occur, and many outcomes that can result. It depends on who is directly involved in the decision-making process. Regardless of the decision-making process that is used, it is important to be clear, straightforward, and honest with all of the issues. This helps participants who are engaged in reaching consensus have an accurate picture of the implications.

Step six is the planning. A critical factor in any major change is the timing. At what point do we plan to implement this change and how long do we have to plan for it? These are important questions, as they allow the RTI team to consider how much time is needed before a change in the schedule can occur. Some schools may take three months to plan, as the modifications are easily accepted by staff and require small changes to daily plans. Some schools may need a year to plan, as there are larger implications for teachers' schedules and more people will be affected.

It is important to consider the implications for staff. How much time do we need to adequately meet as a team and plan accordingly? It may take three months because we have the time to meet frequently. It may take three months because the changes are small and easily adopted by staff. It may take three months because the principal has led a school through similar changes before and is familiar with the process. At the other end, it may take a year to plan because there are many staff that will be affected. It may take a year because building staff consensus will that long. It may take a year to plan all of the details and iron out all the kinks.

Regardless of how long it takes to plan, “planning the planning time” is important. Make sure enough planning time exists. Don’t rush a change without considering all of the implications. Allow the team enough time to work together and create options. Take more time than not, and know that it is good to do that instead of rushing through the process. By doing so, you are helping to ensure that the planning will be thoughtful, supported, and productive throughout the process.

Vignette. All they wanted was a half hour. Thirty minutes to provide additional instruction to students who needed interventions. A little slice of the day to give students what they need, whether they were struggling with concepts or they were advanced beyond the curriculum. The RTI team thought this was a great way to slowly make changes to the schedule and provide teachers the time they need to work with students. Thirty minutes does not sound like a lot, but it was. The team was facing other priorities within the school schedule that were difficult to get rid of. Core subjects, lunch, P.E., and specials already composed the day. The staff were unable to see how anything could be deleted from the schedule without upsetting certain teachers or causing a firestorm from parents. How would they find a half hour in a day already packed with classes and activities? Because of the ramifications and complexities surrounding the change, the RTI team decided to take a year to plan for the schedule modifications. With this amount of time, they had multiple opportunities to meet, problem-solve, brainstorm, present ideas to the rest of the staff, go back to the drawing board, and come back again with new options. While a year seemed like a long time, they knew they needed it to make this work. In their meetings, they asked the hard questions and tried to be creative in their thinking. They tried to come up with many variations, so the pros and cons could all be weighed. By the time May came around, the team finally had some viable options. These options were based on their principles as a school, their impact on all staff, and the need to get students the support they require. The team was able to take five minutes from here, ten minutes from there, until they were able to find the extra half hour that was needed. In the end, not everyone was happy. But most people understood the rationale and final option that was selected. For some, it was an easy transition. For others, it was more difficult. But the team felt it was a success, not because certain people were pleased, but

because they had spent the time to work through a process and do it well. They remembered where they had started and knew that the school had come a long way.

Step seven is where the action comes in. It is time to implement the decision and see how it all plays out. While there may be foreseeable areas of concern, there also may be some surprises. Some things may go more smoothly than expected, while other unexpected issues may arise. Regardless, now is the time for it to all happen, both good and bad, easy and difficult. It is important during this time to take note of what positive outcomes occur, what issues arise, and what questions result. There can be a designated person to take note of the pluses, minuses, and questions and date them so the school has a running record of implementation. This is useful information that can be used formatively, as the implementation is occurring to make changes as needed. This is also good data to have for summative decisions, as the team is looking back and assessing the overall impact of the new schedule.

Throughout the whole process, it is important to do two things as a RTI leadership team: remind people there will be bumps in the road and communication will be open and honest. The bumps may be bumps, but they are OK and expected. Communication will be open and frequent so people are aware of what is occurring. By giving staff information, they are kept involved in the process. This can do a lot to answer questions and address concerns.

Ideally we would all appreciate if the changes in our lives were smooth transitions. Sometimes this is the case and other times not. In a year when the schedule has been altered, many staff may be affected or few staff may be affected. Until the change occurs, it can be difficult to predict all of the outcomes that will result. So it may not be smooth sailing for a while. People may understand this logic, but when you're in the middle of it, it is difficult to keep that in mind. Reminding teachers that there will be ups and downs can be a very helpful conversation to have.

Communication also will be kept open and frequent, so that all staff are aware of the events and accurately informed of what's occurring. This seems logical, as we like to assume that is a major change will be implemented, we will be informed. Yet sometimes life gets in the way. The information may get to people, but it's late, or confusing, or misconstrued.

So what is the best way to convey this information to the school? The answer is: it depends. It depends on multiple factors including:

- Magnitude of the change
- Complexity of the change
- Number of people affected
- The specific staff that are affected
- Amount of staff buy in
- When the change will occur
- How the change will occur

Given that every school is it's own living, breathing environment, each atmosphere is different. Each school has different factors to contend with and different issues to address. With these realities, a schedule alteration may be an easy change for some, and a huge jump for others. It is important to consider the factors listed above and choose the best method of presenting the information.

Why is this important? Choosing an appropriate method of presenting the information is critical because it helps prevent rumors. It helps people to feel informed, so there is less guessing and fewer conversations that center around negative comments. And it continues to validate that teachers are valued staff members whose voices are heard. It helps people to feel like a part of the process, even if they are not directly involved with the RTI leadership team.

The final step is evaluate the decision. What's working? What can be improved? First, this can be done formatively, or on an ongoing basis. If the team is meeting once a month, they can easily discuss what is going well and what may need to be changed. This may lead to smaller changes in the schedule depending on how things are going for the school. These are great opportunities to open it up for honest conversations, allow staff to take their concerns to the RTI team, and support the process of brainstorming and problem solving as issues arise.

Second, this can be done summatively, or at the end of the school year. Now that the team has information from the first year of implementation, there can be a meeting to review data and make plans for the following year. These are the fun meetings, the ones where you get to

look back, remember what occurred, and start talking about next year (knowing that summer vacation is here). Some questions that the RTI leadership team can use to guide the discussion are below.

Questions

- What are the positive outcomes? Successes? Celebrations?
- What are the aspects that can be improved?
- Does anything need to be changed for next year?
- How do we make changes for next year?
- How did the changes evolve from September to June?
- How were staff affected over the course of the year?
- What responsibilities do we have in the fall to sustain implementation?
- What have we learned overall from the whole process?

Schedules

Changing the schedule is a complex task because each grade is affected in a different way. It's not a task where if the times, classes or order of classes is changed, each grade is impacted the same. Grade levels typically operate very differently from one another, so each class can access the library, computer lab, lunchroom, playground, P.E., art, and music at different times. They also operate differently because they are teaching different subjects at different times, depending on the ages of the students. Thus, one change in 2nd grade can look completely unlike the same change in 5th grade.

The following schedules are presented as examples from other elementary schools as they adopted an RTI model and had to fit additional instructional time within the school day. Because each grade level is impacted differently, multiple grade levels are included. The

schedules are only a few examples of what exists. They represent how daily activities have played out differently depending on the district principles, priorities, and beliefs.

Schedules are better described through explicit examples, rather than just concepts. It is helpful to see what other schools have done in this transition and how they made it work. This does two things. One, it shows that yes, it can be done. Other schools have actually found the time to change their practices for RTI implementation. Two, it provides multiple options to consider, so teams can learn from others. Instead of re-inventing the wheel, the schedules below can help schools make the wheel roll a little bit easier. Then the transition can be a smooth one on the highway, instead of a bumpy one on the back roads.

Schedule 1: Kindergarten

Breakfast	8:00-8:30
Class begins	8:30-8:40
Announcements	8:40-8:45
Calendar and morning meeting	8:45-9:00
Phonemic awareness activity	9:00-9:10
Whole group writing	9:10-9:30
Whole group reading	9:30-10:00
Reading curriculum	10:00-10:30
Literacy centers	10:30-11:00
Intervention groups	11:00-11:20
Lunch and recess	11:25-11:55
Story read aloud	11:55-12:10
Rest, read, or write	12:10-12:30
ESL instruction for ELL's	12:00-12:35
Writer's workshop	12:30-1:10
Specials	1:10-1:40

Math	1:40-2:15
Choice time or recess	2:15-2:45
End of day	2:45-3:00

Schedule 2: First grade

Planning time	8:30-9:00
Class start	9:00-9:05
Phonics activity	9:05-9:20
Reading: Literacy centers	9:20-10:05
Bathroom break and recess	10:05-10:25
Math	10:25-11:10
Spelling	11:10-11:30
Lunch and second recess	11:30-12:10
Specials: Art, music, library, guidance	12:10-12:50
Intervention groups	12:50-1:20
Written language	1:20-2:05
P.E.	2:05-2:40
Science/Social studies	2:40-3:25
Line up for busses	3:25-3:35

Schedule 3: Second grade

Prep time	8:00-8:30
Students arrive	8:30-8:40
Math	8:40-9:40
Intervention groups	9:40-10:10
Recess	10:10-10:30
Reading block	10:30-11:30
Lunch	11:30-12:00
Art, music, computer lab or guidance	12:00-1:00
Writing block	1:00-2:00
Science or social studies	2:00-3:00
P.E.	3:00-3:30
Get ready to go home	3:30-3:45

Schedule 4: Third grade

Intervention groups	8:00-8:30
90 minute core reading	8:30-10:00

Recess	10:00-10:15
Writing	10:15-11:00
Spelling	11:00-11:20
Lunch and recess	11:20-12:00
Math	12:00-12:45
Science	12:45-1:30
Art, music, library, computer lab	1:30-2:30
P.E.	2:30-3:00
Social studies	3:00-3:45
End of day	3:45-3:50

Schedule 5: Fourth grade

Homeroom	8:20-8:40
Reading	8:40-9:40
Intervention groups	9:40-10:10
Math	10:10-11:10
Lunch	11:10-11:30
Recess	11:30-11:50

Art, music, library, computer lab	11:50-12:40
Written language	12:40-1:40
Science/Social Studies	1:40-2:20
P.E.	2:20-3:00
Study Hall/Guidance	3:00-3:30
End of day	3:30-3:40

→ Other schedule examples from Rachel and Louise?